

## **Statement on the Need for Reframing Catch Limit Setting**

### **Republic of Korea**

Pacific bluefin tuna stocks are showing signs of rapid recovery, thanks to the conservation and management efforts of the harvesting Members. Despite having the least impact by a large margin on PBF resources, Korea willingly joined the mandatory restriction of catch limits and subsequent 50% reduction of juvenile fish a decade ago to support stock recovery.

Korea, a coastal state through whose waters PBF migrate, implemented a zero-catch limit for adult fish due to the absence of established data from 2002-2004, which dates back 20 years. Over the past decade, Korea refrained from exercising its rights as a coastal state to contribute to stock recovery. Clearly, Korea did not contribute to the stock decline, yet bore a disproportionate burden alongside much larger harvesters. Despite this, Korea tolerated an inequitable allocation of the recent increase in adult PBF catch limits compared to other harvesters in 2021.

For the last decade, Korean fishers have made significant sacrifices despite the increasing amount of large PBF occurring in the coastal areas and now seek fair resource allocation within their national waters. This isn't just about the desires of fishers; environmental and socio-economic factors have significantly evolved over the past two decades, and Korea, as a nation, asserts its rights as a coastal state. Addressing economic, social, and political demands is a governmental responsibility.

Historical catch should not solely dictate allocation. It's time for the WCPFC, through the Northern Committee, to move away from basing national limits on catch history from 20 years ago, which Korea can no longer accept. The current framework undermines Korea's coastal state rights.

PBF that migrate through Korea's waters mainly occur within 12 nautical miles. While WCPFC CMMs do not apply to a Member's territorial and archipelagic waters, Korea could have chosen to enact its own measures to conserve and manage PBF within its territorial waters. Nonetheless, Korea has fully complied with existing regulations despite facing significant internal challenges.

Korea strongly urges the WCPFC, through the Northern Committee, to reconsider the framework for

setting catch limits, taking into account coastal state rights, fishing capacity, resource distribution, and other relevant factors.